

March 7, 2016

MP Bill Casey
Chair, Standing Committee on Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
Bill.Casey@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Casey,

We are aware that the Standing Committee on Health is currently considering which health issues to study at Committee in the coming months. We have read with interest some of your committee members' comments on the subject of organ transplantation in Canada and wanted to bring to your attention an opportunity to drastically reduce the number of liver transplantations needed across the country now, and for years to come.

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a leading cause of liver transplantation in Canada but it does not have to be that way. HCV is a life-threatening virus that attacks the liver and can lead to liver cancer, liver failure or death. At least 250,000 Canadians are living with HCV, with thousands of new infections happening every year. This virus has been identified as one of the top public health concerns and most burdensome infectious diseases in Canada.

Now for the good news – HCV is a well-understood virus. It is preventable and thanks to new treatments, it is now curable. These new treatments along with our knowledge about successful prevention practices make it possible to envision eliminating this life-threatening virus in Canada.

In recent years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has responded to the health burden of viral hepatitis by passing several resolutions calling on its member states to develop and implement viral Hepatitis strategies.

Many countries around the world have responded to the discovery of a cure for HCV by putting plans in place to prevent, diagnose and treat people living with the virus. Despite endorsing the WHO's 2014 resolution urging member groups to "develop and implement coordinated

multisectoral national strategies for preventing, diagnosing and treatment viral hepatitis,” Canada has yet to follow-up with meaningful action. The prevalence of advanced liver disease as a result of HCV continues to rise in Canada as does the prevalence of new cases of HCV.

Action Hepatitis Canada and our membership ask that you consider adding the elimination of HCV to the agenda to be studied by the Standing Committee on Health. It would be our pleasure to talk with you at any time about HCV, treatment, and the barriers preventing the elimination of this disease in Canada.

Sincerely,



Patricia Bacon
Chair, Action Hepatitis Canada

cc: Don Davies, Vice-chair, HESA
Len Webber, Vice-chair, HESA
Dr. Doug Elyofson, HESA
John Oliver, HESA

***Action Hepatitis Canada** is a national coalition of organizations responding to hepatitis B and C. Our work engages government, policy makers, and civil society across Canada to promote hepatitis B and C **prevention**, improve access to care and **treatment**, increase knowledge and innovation, create public health **awareness**, build health-professional capacity, and **support** community-based groups and initiatives.*